

objectives were to learn about eating with others, the use of video chat, and interest in VideoDining in older adults during the pandemic. There were 1331 survey attempts with 167 responses meeting the criteria for age (65 years of age or older), U.S. residency, and quality. Participants were 64% male, 77% white, 65% college-educated, and a median age of 67 years (IQR=2 years). Few participants lived alone (17%), yet 76% reported feeling isolated. Eating with others regularly, defined as several times a week or more, declined in the pandemic (44% vs. 59% pre-pandemic,  $p=0.0002$ ). The use of video chat and eating when video chatting increased during the pandemic versus pre-pandemic (82% vs. 74%,  $p=0.003$ ; 47% vs. 37%,  $p=0.0005$ ). The majority of participants said they would VideoDine (50%) or consider trying it (37%). Interest in VideoDining did not vary by age, race, or gender. Participants who used video chat were more likely to say they would VideoDine than participants who had never used video chat (OR=3.1; 95% CI=1.25, 8.35;  $p=0.02$ ). This data suggests most adults 65 years of age and older, already using the Internet, are experiencing isolation and decreased mealtime commensality during the pandemic. The vast majority are using video chat and are interested in trying VideoDining.

#### VIRAL CULTURE IN HOSPITALIZED CONGREGATE CARE PATIENTS WITH PROLONGED SARS-COV-2 VIRAL RNA DETECTION

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Prolonged detection of SARS-CoV-2 viral RNA has been observed in hospitalized congregate care patients following resolution of clinical symptoms. It is unknown whether patients with persistent PCR positivity pose a risk for COVID-19 transmission. The purpose of this study was to examine the results of serial PCR testing, viral load, and viral culture in patients awaiting discharge prior to a negative PCR test. We sampled 14 patients who were admitted from skilled nursing and/or rehabilitation facilities to a large academic medical center, had clinical signs and symptoms of COVID-19, and had multiple PCR-positive tests separated by at least 14 days. PCR-positive nasopharyngeal swabs were obtained from each patient for viral load quantification and viral culture. The mean age of patients was 72.5 years (55 – 92), with a mean peak SOFA score of 5.6 (1 – 11). Patients were hospitalized for a mean of 37.0 days (25 – 60). RNA was detected by PCR for a mean of 32.9 days (19 – 47). Mean viral load for the first PCR-positive nasopharyngeal swab collected at our hospital was 5.81 genomic copies/mL (2.12 – 9.72). Viral load decreased significantly with days from clinical symptom onset ( $R = -0.69$ , 95% CI, -0.80 – -0.55). Four out of 28 samples grew active virus via culture, with no active virus isolates after 2 days of symptom onset. Our viral culture data suggests that persistent PCR positivity may not correlate with

infectivity, which has important implications for COVID-19 infection control precautions among older congregate care patients.

## COVID-19 Pandemic

### Session 9165 (Poster)

#### “HUNGER WOULD KILL US INSTEAD OF THE PANDEMIC:” ELDERS’ RESPONSES TO COVID-19 IN ETHIOPIA

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The COVID-19 pandemic has posed unpredictable challenges globally. Urban elders in Global South nations are among the major population groups vulnerable to COVID-19. A qualitative case study design was used to uncover the challenges and sources of support for poor urban elders during COVID-19 lockdown in Ethiopia. Data were collected from 27 elders age 60 and above in Debre Markos Town via in-depth interviews and document review. Narrative data were analyzed using thematic data analysis. Four prominent themes were identified: 1. Food insecurity (“Hunger would kill us instead of COVID-19”), 2. Hopelessness (“Feeling hopeless and begging to die”), 3. Social isolation (“We prefer social support rather than food donations”) and 4. Gratitude (“Feeling thankful”). The physical distancing program introduced to contain the pandemic isolated many elders and diminished their capacity to access support from others needed to perform their daily activities. An institutional welfare system is needed to ensure older adults in the Global South can live a joyful and dignified life, even through a global pandemic. Moreover, a special emergency fund to meet older adults’ basic needs during a pandemic like COVID-19 should be introduced to minimize the effect of crises on vulnerable groups like destitute older adults in Ethiopia.

#### ADAPTABILITY OF OLDER ADULTS AT THE ONSET OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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It is important to understand the unique experiences and perspectives of older adults who were required to incorporate critical adjustments to behavior during the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. An anonymous, cross sectional survey was administered online through Qualtrics Survey Software in June 2020. The results of this study found that older adults utilized different sources of information than younger adults; they were more likely to read the newspaper or listen to the radio, and less likely to rely on social media for information. Older respondents in this study reported coping with the COVID-19 outbreak better than younger respondents,